

## **Recommendation Form for Celina Deleon**

**Celina Deleon was recommended to MOVA's Spotlight Program by Shelley Grant, a Victim/Witness Advocate in the Hampden District Attorney's Office. The following was written by Ms. Grant.**

Celina Deleon made the successful transition from victim to survivor at a time in her life that was most difficult. She survived an abusive relationship and at the same time, the death of her child. Her tremendous strength and courage allowed her to move through a very lengthy process with conviction and dignity. She was able to grieve the loss of her child while thrust into the world of the criminal justice system. Ms. Deleon's abuser filed charges against her in Holyoke which appeared to be retaliatory as she went forward with the cases. Throughout, Celina participated in this process involving multiple hearings with her abuser – and she treated herself with respect and dignity as she also did the court.

Ms. Deleon had struggled with her abusive partner/relationship and, like many, returned to him briefly. She was able to move on and make clear, healthy choices and demonstrated strength and courage while doing so. She volunteered to speak to teenage girls who have either experienced abuse or were in dating relationships. She spoke at the citizen Police Academy and started a domestic violence support group under the leadership of the DV Coordinator at Westfield, P.D. She has since obtained employment on a full-time basis working at a company that holds great promise for her.

Following the sudden death of her child, Celina utilized her supports and chose a path that has led to many wonderful things in her life. Ms. Deleon chose to utilize those supports available to her including victim/witness advocate, her mother and friends. Most importantly, Celina developed a close relationship with Donna Suckau, DV Coordinator at the Police Department. Celina chose to surround herself with people who cared about her and supported her. She successfully managed a myriad of feelings and was able to be patient with herself and the system. She is truly an extraordinary woman, at the age of 22.

Celina has taken what would be a terrible experience in her young life exacerbated by the sudden death of her child and managed to give so much to others. Her presence and personal experience have been meaningful to young women she's met – and to everyone who has known her.

**All Spotlight victim-thrivers have an opportunity to respond to the information provided in the recommendation form and add any sources of inspiration for her/himself.**

I would like to say how honored I feel to have been recommended for this program. I look back on my life and see all that I have been through, and what a struggle it has been to get to where I am. My life continues to be a battle. Everyday I wake up and realize the reality of my life, the abuse I succumbed to and the realization that my son is no longer

physically with me. I am told by many, that I don't give myself enough credit for all that I have accomplished in such a short time. I guess it's hard to award myself, when I don't feel like a whole person without my son.

Through this horrible time in my life, I met an extraordinary and very strong woman named Donna Suckau. I took me awhile before I found the strength to ask for the help that I needed. Eventually, I had seen that she was someone that I could trust and be safe with. From that day on, she stood by my side and became my rock. I am so very grateful for this woman. I couldn't have gotten away from my abuser if it wasn't for her. When I had to face my abuser in court, I was scared. It was amazing how the people of the court and Donna Suckau protected me and helped me. Shelley Grant from the Hampden District Attorney's Office was another woman who stood by me through it all. Shelley and Donna's words of wisdom helped me find hope, and also helped me find myself again.

This chapter of my life changed me forever. I have a scar that will never heal and memories that will never go away. The strength that I have within myself, I believe comes from the love and spirit of my little boy. My sources of inspiration are Donna Suckau, Shelley Grant and most of all, my son, Lorenzo Donato De Leon.

I have chosen to take life as it comes, but not to take anything that I have for granted. Life is too precious to waste away and sadly I had to learn that the hard way. People tell me that they can't imagine going through what I went through. I tell them I wouldn't want them to, because I would never wish for it to happen to anyone. I want people to listen to my story because I want to make a difference in someone's life even if it is only one person. At least I'll know that there is one less person that has to feel the pain, and live with bad memories - the memories that occur over and over again in your mind, as a result of being in an abusive relationship. Or that there is one child that has a chance to live a better life.

Again, I would like to thank Shelley for her recommendation and MOVA for giving me an opportunity to tell others my story. To show, that even though times can be hard and sometimes life-altering, people can find the strength within them to carry on, with the support of family and friends...to live a happier life by making better choices.

**Spotlight works to highlight the courage, strength and determination it takes to move from victim to thriver. We hope the following has provided hope to those in need. Any questions, concerns and thoughts can be directed to Alexandra Detjens, Victim Services Coordinator at 617-727-9752 or [Alexandra.Detjens@state.ma.us](mailto:Alexandra.Detjens@state.ma.us)**